

2.

FAMOUS NAMES

—IN—

IRISH HISTORY!

BY THE REV.

FATHER BURKE.

(LECTURE DELIVERED IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY.)

~~~~~  
"Erin, My Country!  
Tho' sad and forsaken,  
~~~~~

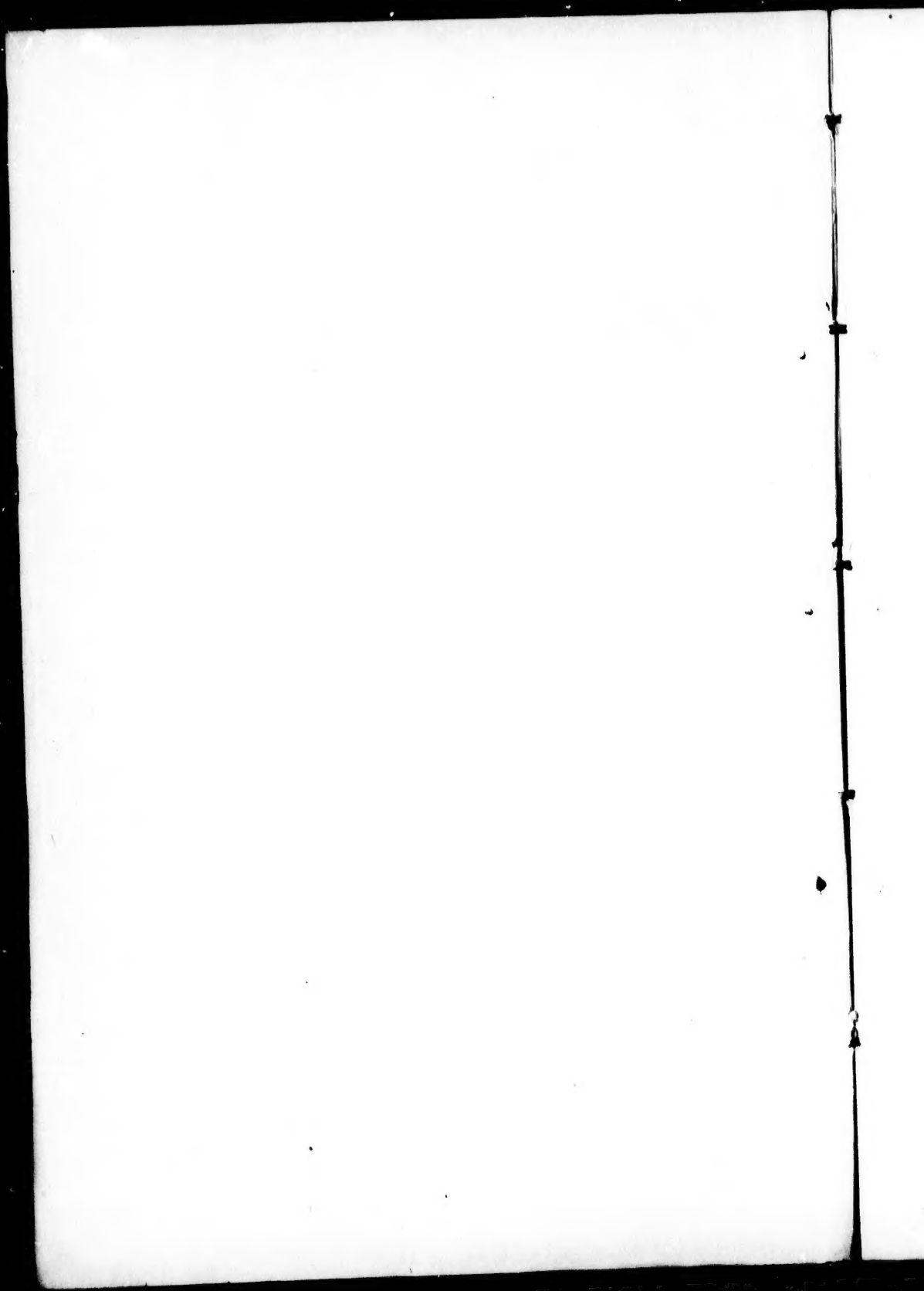


~~~~~  
"In dreams I revisit  
Thy sea beaten shore."  
~~~~~

OTTAWA:

FREE PRESS STEAM PRINTING ESTABLISHMENT, ELGIN STREET.

1873.



FAMOUS NAMES
—IN—
IRISH HISTORY!

BY THE REV.

FATHER BURKE.

LECTURE DELIVERED IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY.

(From the Western Watchman.)

The following eloquent Lecture was delivered by the Rev. Father BURKE, in Weisiger Hall, Louisville, Kentucky, previous to his departure for Europe :—

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—The subject on which I propose to address you this evening is the Famous Names in Ireland's History. But first of all let me remind you that next to their Religion the Irish are a people who are supposed to love their history. A history is the recall of a nation's life, and it is in their history that we find all the elements that form the national character. It is in the history that the blessings and future destinies of nations are found, and next to the grace of belonging to the true religion of Christ, comes the glory and pride which must fill the heart of every true man when he goes back and turns over the annals of his country's history, and finds those pages unstained and unspotted by treachery, treason or crime. (Applause.)

The history which he sees may be a recall of national misfortune, but yet free from the taint of national dishonor. France to-day is unfortunate, but what man on the face of the earth will have the hardihood to say that France is dishonored, and in the recall of the recent gigantic struggles, in your own country, are not friend and foe unanimous in declaring that

the brave of the South, although they were obliged to yield, yielded without dishonor? (Applause.)

My friends, though it is the history of the land from which I come, its pages are written in the tears, and blood and suffering, and also the honor of a heroic people. (Applause.)

The man and child of Erin may weep over the recall of its national history. Yes, he may weep, but while bitter tears may fall from his eyes, no blush can come to his face, for there is no taint to his honor there.

Now, my friends, before I bring forth the subject of my lecture to your notice, I wish to say one word which will, perhaps, surprise some of you; and yet you will admire its truth after a moments reflection. Nothing is more common than for men in our day to imagine that there is some necessary antipathy between the English and the Irish. They say, for instance, put an Englishman and an Irishman into a room and they will fight. (Laughter.) In New York, when Froude came, my friends came to me and said: "Did you see that an Englishman has come over?" evidently expecting that I would immediately respond, "Where is he 'till I fight him." (Laughter.)

NO HATRED BETWEEN ENGLAND AND IRELAND.

Now, my friends, that is fallacious. It is not true. There is no inherent antagonism between Englishmen and Irishmen. Generally speaking, intercourse between them makes them good friends. I have known it by experience; I have known it in a thousand cases. The fact and truth of it is, that it is not antipathy of race that causes this separation between the English people and the Irish people, but it is a well remembered series of the most atrocious injuries inflicted upon the Irish people on the one hand, and a terrible separation of religious opinions which exists on the other. It is a remarkable fact in our history, my friends, that we never gained one great decided victory over the English until they changed their faith and ceased to be Catholic. I don't want to narrow any national question down to a mere religious foundation, but we have before us the historic fact, that until two hundred years ago, when England became Protestant, while Ireland remained Catholic, the Irish nation had not gained a single decisive victory over the English people, while from that time we have to recall the most signal victories gained by Ireland. (Applause.)

I remember speaking to a beggar man in Galway on this subject—the fellow had not a six-pence worth of clothes on him, yet he was a man well up in the history of Ireland. Says he: “As long as they had the sign of the cross on them we didn’t know how to strike them properly. (Applause). My friends, you have all read and studied the history of Ireland, and it is a history that comes very near home to many among you.

INVASION OF THE NORMANS.

The Normans invaded Ireland at the close of the twelfth century. They found Ireland broken up and divided after the death of the heroic Conn. O’Brien, but not broken in courage. Notwithstanding this, they were unable to take possession of Ireland. These divisions among themselves continued during the reign of the Plantagenet Kings—during the reign of the Edwards down to the time of Henry VII., more than four hundred years. The battle was fought on every field in Ireland, but the ancient courage of the race remained, and though divided, the grand soul of the cause was holy enough and the love of the people was strong enough to make every Irishman come forth and strike a blow and bleed and die for his native land. (Applause.)

But it was only in the sixteenth century—three hundred years ago—that the contest between the two nations assumed the great proportions of a national war. Henry VIII. called upon Ireland, not only to resign the idea that she was a nation, but he called upon her to abjure her allegiance to the religion which she had received from St. Patrick. The sword which had never been sheathed for three hundred years was once more raised, and the nation swore that two things should never perish, viz.: that they were a nation and a Catholic people. (Applause.)

Then the clans that were so separated again united. Nay, more, foremost in the national contest appeared a people who never before had fought for Ireland’s glory, namely, the ancient Normans who came over with Strongbow.

I wish to speak kindly of the Fitzgeralds, because, as Mr. Froude reminds me, I have a drop of their blood in my veins. Their brothers in England had become Protestants, but they had stayed in Ireland and mixed themselves up with the Irish people, and then, like men they threw their sword into the cause of Ireland because the cause of Ireland

became the cause of the Catholic Church. Thence among the names illustrious in Irish history of men who stood foremost in the ranks of the nation, and holding the very first place was Gerald Fitzgerald, who, though not an Irishman by descent, was an Irishman by birth, and fought against Henry VIII. in the cause of Ireland's freedom and Ireland's faith. Nearly the whole of Leinster was wasted with fire and sword, the clans were put down, and then the great treaty of peace held on until four years later when another man came to the front—a name upon which I love to rest—a man who has been abused and calumniated by English writers—even by the latest of those writers—a man who came over here to try to persuade the American people that the Irish were the most God abandoned people upon the face of the earth. (Applause.) I hope that the next mission he undertakes will be a greater success than his present mission was to America. (Applause.)

THE SECOND FAMOUS NAME.

The man of whom I speak was the celebrated Shaun O'Neill. He was called Shaun the Proud.

Now, my friends, I need not remind you that among the descendants of ancient Milesias, the first of our bravest and best was the House of O'Neill of Alston. In 1551 Conn O'Neill went to England and was created Earl of Tyrone by Henry VIII. God bless the mark. When he came home to Ireland after having paid homage to the English monarch, the very first question asked by his people was :

"Who gave you leave to do that? You are an Irish King. You are equal to any English monarch. You are of a far more noble and ancient family, who have never disgraced their name. What on earth brought you to resign your sovereignty, and barter away the honor and freedom of the Irish people?" He was not able to give a satisfactory answer. His son stepped out from the ranks and drew his ancient sword in the name of Ireland, and in the name of the Catholic religion; and the very first of the great heroes that stand forth conspicuously in the history of Ireland's struggle with the treacherous and tyrannical King, is the name of Shaun O'Neill. (Applause.)

They tried to purchase him, but they found England had not gold enough to corrupt that true-hearted man, and for fifteen years he fought the whole army of England and asserted his sovereignty for ten years

against Queen Elizabeth. I grant you that he was no saint. I have no sympathy with the man's personal character at all. He was one of the most atrocious characters for immorality that Irish history furnishes, but still English writers confess it of him that whenever the Catholic religion or the name of Ireland was insulted, he drew his sword like a man. How did he die? It is the history of the greater part of Ireland's heroes. There was an English gentleman sent over by Queen Elizabeth, named Captain Pierce, and he drew the brave Irishman in among a number of his men. They were afraid of him. They gathered around him and said some insulting things of Ireland and Ireland's faith. The old man drew his sword on the spot, and fell pierced by a thousand wounds to plead the justice of his cause before the tribunal of God.

QUEEN ELIZABETH.

While Shaun O'Neill was thus combatting for Ireland there was a little boy being reared in the Court of Queen Elizabeth, a nephew of Shaun's, called Hugh O'Neill, a mild and inoffensive youth, apparently not possessing much genius. He conformed to England's institutions in everything while in England except pretending to be a Protestant—that he never would do. In Queen Elizabeth's presence he made the sign of the cross as broad as his shoulders would bear him. He used to give the old Queen "fits," as you say in this country. (Laughter.) Queen Elizabeth was no lover of the cross; she never liked to see it, and I don't think she will ever be very much troubled by the signs of it again. (Applause and laughter.) The young man was destined as a tool when he came over to Ireland. He was intended to be used as a kind of instrument toward the suppression of the mighty clan of O'Neill. How little they knew. The young man had formed the determination to strike the blow every day of his life for the land of his fathers. He landed in Leinster, and the English Ambassador who accompanied him saluted him as Earl of Tyrone. He reached the place where the ancient family of O'Neill were accustomed to be crowned. While all hearts around him were indignant to think that the last son of their royal house should be brought in by the soldiers of England, as he stood on that spot he drew his sword, and turning to those who had accompanied him said, "Now salute me." They gave their "All hail, Earl of Tyrone." Suddenly the face which had heretofore been so gentle lighted up, and, raising his arm, he turned to the astonished Englishman and cried, "I stand upon my native earth, and my only title is that of O'Neill." (Applause.)

FROM THAT DAY,

for twelve long years the brave Irishman stood where his uncle was accustomed to stand—right in the midst of the battle with the flag of Ireland and of the cross floating over his head, a true man and a true Catholic. For twelve years he braved the whole power of England and occupied Ulster, a king against all the troops Queen Elizabeth could send against him. How did he die? The same old story. When he was a broken hearted old man they got up a sham conspiracy against him, and he was obliged to fly from Ireland—fly from the land for which he had fought and bled the best years of his life. But the tradition died not with Hugh O'Neill. It lived as it lives to-day. Hugh O'Neill died in Rome a penitent man. Queen Elizabeth died at Hamilton Court an impenitent woman. She longed to see Hugh O'Neill, but she died without having seen him, and I verily believe she never will see him. (Laughter.)

CHARLES I. CAME TO THE THRONE,

and the next great name in Irish history came fourth, shining like a star illuminated in gold upon an ancient choir-book—the name of another O'Neill—Owen O'Neill. In the year 1642, when Charles was in the midst of his troubles with his Parliament, the Catholics of Ireland rose. They had been oppressed for more than a century, but they had no great hatred of the English as a people. They had been punished with the most dreadful penalties for the faithful adherence to the religion of their fathers, but they still remained true. At that time Owen O'Neill was at the head of the greatest army in the world—the Spanish Infantry—and he was acknowledged to be the first General of his time. When he found that his brothers had risen, he flew to the aid of Ireland. He arrived in Ireland in 1643 or 1644, rallied the clan of O'Neill, of Alston, and when the English army appeared before him his force footed up to twenty thousand men. The two armies met upon the Blackwater one bright summer's morning, and when the evening came not a single flag of the English array was left upon the field, nor a single soldier left to uphold it. (Applause.) How did he die. The old story.

In 1649 a scourge of God came to Ireland in the shape of Oliver Cromwell. At the head of the English army Cromwell was afraid of the Irish general. Advancing upon his march to the town of Londonderry, from there he sent a message to the camp of O'Neill and poisoned him.

OLIVER CROMWELL FOLLOWED QUEEN ELIZABETH,
and where she is, in all probability, he is keeping her company. Don't be ambitious, my friends, of going where they are. I believe that any man who wished to sup with them this evening should provide himself with a very long spoon. (Laughter and applause.)

James the II was a Catholic, but no sooner was he made King than the English people began to rebel against him for being a Catholic. I regret religious animosity as much as any man. I don't believe that I have any of it myself, but certain it is that in that day the English people were bitterly opposed to having any one govern them and be their King who was a Catholic. James came to Ireland, and, though the Irish people were unwilling to fight for him as an English King, they were willing to fight for any man who was persecuted for his religion, and they rose in defence of their monarch.—And here comes the next great name upon the record of Irish history—the name of the illustrious and immortal Sarsfield the bravest man of his time—the bravest officer in that age of brave men. He fought through all the campaigns in Ireland until at length, in 1692 he, with a handful of about twenty thousand men—which was but a handful considering the army against, for William of Orange at the battle of the Boyne had eighty thousand men on the field—was obliged to surrender, and the terms of the Treaty of Limerick were signed.

BY THAT TREATY THE CATHOLICS

of Ireland were guaranteed a certain amount of religious liberty. They were guaranteed full commercial liberty. They were guaranteed their rights as citizens! Sarsfield was present at the signing, but no sooner had he left the country than all the provisions of that solemn Treaty were violated by the victors. The Catholics were more oppressed and the commercial interests of Ireland—the woollen and linen trade—were destroyed.

In the meantime Sarsfield had betaken himself to the fields of France, and there upon the field of honor, danger and glory, he and his Irishmen still maintained Ireland's ancient fame for undaunted courage and grandeur in the field. He had his revenge a few years later fighting in the armies of France. He met in the field William of Orange, King of England, and right glad was the Irish General to meet him. They fought until at length the army of the English King was routed and sent flying over the field, and the brave Irish General had the opportunity of

seeing before him, in full flight, the broad back of his English foe ; but as he was about to close with his flying enemy, a stray shot pierced his heart and he fell covered with glory. As he fell, he raised his hands, all bloody from the wounds which he had received, to heaven, and cried, " Ah, God ! If this blood had only been shed for Ireland," and expired. Sarsfield died, but the thirty thousand brave Irishmen in the service of France were constantly kept recruited, forming

THE FAMOUS IRISH BRIGADE,

which, far away from their native land, was animated by the love of their religion and the land that bore them. The charge of the Irish Brigade at Fontenoy and their destruction has been immortalized by the stirring verse of Ireland's poet, and will never be forgotten.

This brave brigade passed away, but the spirit that animated it lived on. It was revived in the brave and gallant Gratton, but he went down broken-hearted to his grave over the detestable action of the British Government. But the spirit still lived on, and lived in the illustrious Irish hero, Daniel O'Connell.

But alas ! it seemed to be the portion of every great Irishman to die a broken-hearted man, and it may be said that they failed ; but the great principle by which they were animated, and which led them on to deeds of valor and glory, did not fail and it never will fail. That spirit has achieved the greatest triumph of the nineteenth century, not in war, but in one of the greatest peaceful and moral victories—the disestablishment of that stain on Ireland, the Protestant Establishment. The spirit of faith that animated these noble heroes, whose names have been mentioned, still lives on and must ever live on, and that spirit is the principle of Ireland's Catholicity and a national patriot love of the land. An English gentleman in New York the other day acknowledged that Ireland was the only nation where faith and nationality go together, inseparably together, and and that wherever the national standard is uplifted, there, side by side with it, is to be seen the cross of Christ. Men may die, but this principle never dies.

IRELAND'S PRESENT WANT.

But it may be asked, what are the Irish people complaining of now ? Catholics are emancipated. They were grumbling about the Protestant church, but that establishment has ceased to oppress. It is asked what right the people of Ireland have to complain now ? There are many things

of which they have to complain. The people have grounds of complaint to make of a serious nature of England. They are of a more substantial character than those of the old woman who was always complaining as the story goes. When an Irish Priest went to her she said she didn't have any turf to keep her fire. He sent her some turf, but she still grumbled and said she wanted planks. He gave her planks, but still she grumbled and said she would like to have a little bacon. He sent her the bacon but still she grumbled. The Priest told her to think how good God had been to her to furnish her all these things.

She said, "O yes, God has been good to me, but you know it has all been taken away by the Corn Law." (Laughter and applause.) But Ireland has some real cause for complaint. The speaker said he was an Irishman, and all belonging to him had been Irish for seven hundred years—since the Normans came—but that he was in America now and was residing here. If he should go home to his native land, the first man he met could inform the authorities of his arrival, and he could be transported for being a Friar. There the law stands in black and white. Is that nothing to complain of?

A wealthy man of Cork, by his last will, left three or four hundred pounds to the Dominican Friars, but the authorities came in and said they should not have it. But if one of these Friars commit a crime they recognize his existence at once. The English Government founded four Queen's Colleges in Catholic Ireland. In all of these Colleges the name of God was not to be mentioned; and yet Catholics are expected to send their children to those schools. The Catholics established a University there, and secured the first professors of Europe, but the English Government will not so much as recognize its existence. They will have their national schools there, but they will not allow a word of Irish to be spoken in those.

It is not to be denied that the National Schools have been a great blessing to Ireland, because education is a great blessing to any country. The future of Ireland and the future of every nation depends mainly upon education. (Applause.)

But where are the laws governing Ireland made? Are they made in Dublin? No, they are made in London, and what do the people of London know about the wants of Ireland? If a bill were brought into Parliament for the improvement of Galway Bay what would be said of it? It

would be spurned as one of those Irish questions, one of those things which are always coming up, and would receive no consideration. These things will continue, and Ireland has the right to complain, and will never be satisfied, until England acknowledges her as a nation—until she has independence, and will consent to be united with England as one nation consents to unite with another. A province of England she has never been and is not to-day and will never be. (Applause.)

But the realization of this glorious dream of independence and the right of Ireland to make her own laws and legislate for herself, depends upon Irishmen at home and abroad. Let no Irishman be ashamed of his name, his religion or his country. (Applause). Irish names are amongst the most high-sounding in the history of the world.

In France, and Spain and Austria, and in all the European nations names of Irishmen are graven in letters of gold. Don't be ashamed of your name or religion. Your religion is the one unifying, ennobling and sanctifying principle that brought you into this foreign land. Let no man be ashamed of the land that gave them birth, and let not his children be ashamed. There is no nation in the world to-day that has a nobler record of heroism, honor, truth and fidelity to God and humanity than our native land, IRELAND. (Applause.)